WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for operating a computer system having first, second, and third data processors connected by a network wherein said second and third data processors are connected by an insecure network segment, said method comprising the steps of:

causing said second data processor to send an encryption key for a first encryption protocol to said third data processor utilizing a second encryption protocol;

causing said third data processor to forward said encryption key to said first data processor; and

causing said first data processor to send a message to said second data processor utilizing said encryption key and said first encryption protocol, said message being sent over a communication path comprising said insecure network segment.

2. The method of Claim 1 wherein said first data processor has insufficient computational resources to execute said second encryption protocol.

3. The method of Claim1 wherein said second encryption protocol is a public key encryption protocol.

4. The method of Claim 1 wherein said step of causing said second data processor to send an encryption key is initiated in response to a message from said first data processor to said second data processor.

5. The method of Claim 1 wherein said insecure network segment comprises the Internet.

6. The method of Claim 1 wherein said network segment connecting said first and third data processors comprises a local area network.

7. The method of Claim 1 wherein said first and third data processors are connected by a network segment that has a higher level of security than said insecure network segment.

8. The method of Claim 1 wherein said first encryption protocol requires less
5   computational resources than said second encryption protocol